

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PORG, VE

SUBJECT: CALL ON FOREIGN MINISTER: OASGA AND BILATERAL COOPERATION

1. I SPENT ABOUT 45 MINUTES WITH ESCOVAR SALOM THIS MORNING ON THE OCCASION OF DELIVERING THE COPIES OF MY LETTERS OF CREDENCE. WE REVIEWED PROSPECTS FOR THE OASGA AND TOUCHED ON POSSIBILITIES FOR FUTURE BILATERAL COOPERATION.

2. ESCOVAR WAS NOT ABLE TO DISCUSS WITH ANY AUTHORITY VENEZUELAN POSITIONS AT THE OASGA. HE HAS YET TO RECEIVE THE NECESSARY "GUIDELINES" FROM CAP AND IS ONLY GENERALLY INFORMED ON SUCH MATTERS AS THE WORK OF THE SPECIAL COMMISSION. HE SAID HIS DELEGATION WOULD BE IN NO HURRY TO ADOPT FIRM POSITIONS AND THAT HE LOOKED FORWARD TO A SERIOUS ROUND OF CONSULTATIONS DURING THE FIRST FEW DAYS AFTER ARRIVAL IN WASHINGTON. HE HOPES FOR A MEETING OF REAL ACCOMPLISHMENT AT WHICH THE U.S. WILL DEMONSTRATE A NEW APPRECIATION OF THE HEMISPHERE'S IMPORTANCE.

3. ON CUBA SANCTIONS, THE MINISTER INDICATED A DISPOSITION TO GO ALONG WITH ANY REASONABLE SOLUTION - ALWAYS PROVIDED THAT A SATISFACTORY OUTCOME IS ASSURED IN ADVANCE. ESCOVAR WANTS TO REPEAT OF THE QUITO EXERCISE. WITH RESPECT TO THE RIO TREATY, HE SAW NO PRESSING NEED FOR FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES BEYOND MODIFICATION OF THE TWO-THIRDS REQUIREMENT. IN FACT, HE FOUND THE TREATY RELATIVELY "INNOCUOUS" AS IT STANDS.

4. THE MINISTER'S ATTITUDE TOWARD CHARTER REFORM FOLLOWED
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THE SAME LINE. HE THOUGHT ELIMINATION OF SOME REDUNDANT

OAS ORGANISMS WOULD BE HELPFUL, BUT DID NOT INDICATE ANY DISPOSITION TOWARD DRASTIC CHANGES. HE FAVORED MAINTAINING THE CONCEPT OF REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY AS A CENTRAL THEME IN THE CHARTER, OBSERVING THAT THOSE WHO MOST LOUDLY ADVOCATE THE PRINCIPLE OF "PLURALISM" SEEMED INEVITABLY TO BE THE HEMISPHERE'S MOST NOTORIOUS ENEMIES OF DEMOCRACY.

5. ESCOVAR AT LEAST TENTATIVELY AGREED WITH ME THAT IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE TO DELAY PROGRESS ON OTHER POINTS PENDING RESOLUTION OF THE PERUVIAN PROPOSAL FOR A CONVENTION ON COLLECTIVE ECONOMIC SECURITY. HERE, AS ELSEWHERE, CAP WILL OF COURSE HAVE THE FINAL WORD. ESCOVAR EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT A DYNAMIC CANDIDATE FOR SECRETARY GENERAL WOULD EMERGE, BUT HAD NO NEW IDEAS ON THAT SCORE.

6. THE MINISTER REVIEWED FOR ME HIS PLANS TO ESTABLISH A WORKING GROUP TO EXAMINE VENEZUELAN RELATIONS WITH THE U.S., DRAWING IN VARIOUS GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES AND THE POLITICAL PARTIES. I SAID WE WERE THINKING OF SOME KIND OF JOINT APPROACH TO LOOK FOR SPECIFIC AREAS OF COOPERATION AND THAT THE SECRETARY WOULD WANT TO TALK TO HIM MORE SPECIFICALLY ABOUT HOW WE MIGHT STRUCTURE SUCH AN EFFORT.

7. COMMENT: I THINK ESCOVAR IS PREPARED TO CONSULT SERIOUSLY WITH US IN WASHINGTON AND TO GIVE OUR VIEWS A FAIR HEARING. HE MIGHT WELL PLAY A MODERATING ROLE, DEPENDING ON CAP'S INSTRUCTIONS AND MACHIN'S ATTITUDE. IT WILL BE IMPORTANT TO GO OVER THE ISSUES WITH HIM CAREFULLY AND IN DETAIL. HIS BACK-GROUND IN OAS MATTERS IS THIN BUT HE SEEMS TO BE A GOOD LISTENER. FURTHER, I HAD THE IMPRESSION OF CONSIDERABLE PRUDENCE - A DETERMINATION TO GO SLOW, NOT BOX HIMSELF INTO ANY CORNERS AND TO TRY FOR CONSENSUS, WITH THE U.S. INCLUDED.

8. I SHOULD NOTE FOR THE RECORD THAT MY RECEPTION BY ESCOVAR COULD NOT HAVE BEEN MORE FORTHCOMING OR CORDIAL. IN FACT, MY ARRIVAL SO FAR HAS MET WITH NOTHING BUT GOOD WILL AND FRIENDSHIP.

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